

For Better or For Worse - Lessons From Old Testament Couples Samson and His Women: The Folly of Passion

Lesson #6 for August 11, 2007

Scriptures: Numbers 6:1-21; Judges 13-16; 1 Samuel 1:11; Hebrews 11:32.

1. The story of Samson raises many questions in our modern minds! In the beginning, what kind of a plan did God have for Samson? Did Samson have some kind of hormonal imbalance? Why did God give Samson all that strength? Who was the bigger fool—Samson or Solomon? How does God give wisdom and/or strength? What is a Nazirite? There apparently are several examples of Nazirites given in Scripture: Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, and Paul. Why did Samson end up being named in Hebrews 11? (Hebrews 11:32)
2. When the name of Samson is mentioned, we often think of Delilah. Although Samson was officially married to another woman, we do not even know her name! Why were these Philistine women so attractive to Solomon? Was Solomon the only Hebrew young man that ended up marrying a Philistine wife?
3. After Samson's experience with his wife and the entanglements which resulted, why did he allow himself to go through the same experience again with Delilah?
4. The story of Samson's parents and how he was promised to them is a delightful one. Do you think that the Nazirite vow to which he was supposed to be committed had anything to do with his almost supernatural strength? Were Samson's muscles actually that much stronger than anyone else's; or did he, in fact, somehow have access to supernatural power?
5. Why do you think God went to such lengths to prepare for the life of this young man when He already knew what the end would be? Wasn't there anyone else who could have served the purpose just as well without all those problems? Samson seemed to be almost completely controlled by his passions. Why do you think that was? Did the hormones which helped him to grow large muscles also give him those uncontrollable passions?
6. This is one story in the Bible which seems to indicate quite clearly that prenatal influences are important. What other stories seem to suggest something similar? If another mother in Samson's day had followed the exact same instructions as were given to Manoah and his wife, would her child have come out to be like Samson?
7. Samson grew up in a small village very near Philistine territory. Was he accustomed from his childhood to mix with the Philistines?
8. Was the appearance of the Philistine women significantly different than that of Jewish women? Was Samson's experience similar to those of the "sons of God" before the flood? Even if Samson was fatally attracted to those women, was it really impossible for him to see through their tricks?
9. Those who have read their Bibles carefully will recognize that the time of the judges was a very low time in terms of spiritual maturity. Was Samson really the best material that God could find in those days?
10. Considering what happened to Samson's wife, what do you think you would have done in her situation? Should she have asked Samson to take her immediately to

his place for safety? Was she ever really in love with Samson? Did she have any choice in either her first marriage or her second marriage? If Samson actually completed the marriage ceremony, why did he leave his wife at her father's home? Did he really expect her to be waiting for him when he came back some time later? (Judges 15:1)

11. Were Samson's parents in any way responsible for him ending up so self-centered?
12. Did any of Samson's Philistine women take any interest in becoming Israelites and worshiping Israel's God? Considering the few episodes that we know about in the life of Samson, do you believe that for the 20 years he served as judge, he remained single? Can you think of any other Bible characters who committed mistakes similar to Samson's?
13. Do you think that the Lord actually led Samson to Timnah to choose a Philistine bride? (Judges 14:3,4) Did God actually inspire Samson to kill a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass? What do you think was Samson's actual source of power? (Judges 15:14,15) What do you expect to happen when the Holy Spirit is poured out on us in our day?

Had the Israelites been prepared to unite with Samson, and follow up the victory gained, they might at this time have freed themselves from the power of the Philistines. But they had become weak and discouraged. They had basely neglected the work which God had commanded them to perform with diligence, thoroughness, and valor; not only failing to dispossess the heathen, but uniting with them in their degrading practices, tolerating their cruelty, and, so long as it was not directed against themselves, even countenancing their injustice. When at last the tyrant power was triumphant, Israel submitted to the degradation which they might have escaped, had they only obeyed God. Even when the Lord raised up a deliverer for them, they would frequently desert the one chosen to set things in order, and would unite with their bitterest oppressors. {ST, October 6, 1881 par. 11}

14. Did Samson become careless about his secrets because he came to believe that he was invincible? Had he begun to think that the power that he was able to manifest was his own and not the result of miraculous power from God?
15. Judges 16 tells the sad story of Samson's downfall. We often think of Samson as a young, almost-teenage, muscleman. However, it should be apparent that by the time he had that experience with Delilah, he was somewhere close to 50 years of age! Was he having a mid-life crisis? What specific lessons should we learn from Samson's downfall? Was he just plain stupid? Was he blinded by passion? How did Delilah exercise such tremendous power over him?
16. The great judge of Israel—Samson—ended up doing the work of an animal! But when he was missing his eyes—which had gotten him into trouble several times—he had time to think! He must have done some very serious thinking because, despite committing suicide and killing thousands of Philistines in the process, his name is listed in Hebrews 11 as a man of great faith and doing "what was right!" (Hebrews 11:32,33) When Samson prayed for strength God responded. Why?

The contest, instead of being between Samson and the Philistines, was now between Jehovah and Dagon, and thus the Lord was moved to assert His almighty power and His supreme authority. {ST, Oct. 13, 1881; 2BC 1007.8; CC 136.5}

17. **Many a young boy has wished for the muscles of Samson. Is the story about Samson included in the Bible to teach us that physical strength is not the answer to most of our problems?**

18. Many of the so-called judges of Israel were actually military leaders who led their armies against their enemies. What kind of a judge was Samson? What qualified him to bear that title? (Judges 15:20)

19. God does not try to win the great controversy by hiding the evidence! No doubt, the devil was touring the universe inviting everyone to take a close look at what was happening here on planet earth and to make an assessment for themselves of how “God’s people” were doing! It would be impossible to hide the evidence from the universe, so God spread it out on the pages of sacred history.

If, in fact, those stories actually took place and the Bible characters such as Rahab, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson did the things that we believe that they did, and if God is trying to win the loyalty and trust of both humans and the rest of the universe for eternity, God had to deal with the facts. No cover-up would do! So, in such a setting, God apparently did the best thing that He could do under the circumstances—He recorded the stories for us to read and ponder.

This approach accomplishes several things: 1) It shows us that God is open and fair in His dealings with everyone. He doesn’t try to bribe the witnesses, cover up the evidence, or deceive the “jury;” 2) It shows us how far God is willing to go to try to reach human beings in very desperate situations; 3) It encourages those who may find themselves in very difficult or compromising situations that God is still willing to work with them.

20. Apparently, this book was completed and compiled after the period of the Judges was over or at least near its end. (See Judges 2:11-3:6; 17:6 and 21:25—These passages seem to summarize what happened during the entire period of the Judges) Is it possible that this book was written by Samuel as a “history book” for the students in his “schools of the prophets”? Certainly those students would ask questions such as, “What happened to the tribe of Benjamin?” And that would require an explanation! The students must have known of the rumors circulating about Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, and even Ehud.

21. How should we relate to those around us who seem to be making mistakes similar to those of Samson? Did Samson ever consider marrying a faithful Jewish girl? Surely, the story of Samson is an example of the folly of being unequally yoked!

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